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## Opening Statement by Ranking Member Price

### Southwest Border Hearing

March 16, 2011

Mexico and the United States are friends and allies of long standing, with deep historical, cultural, and political ties. Consider also the economic ties: the United States is Mexico's largest trading partner, buying 85% of Mexican exports. Mexico also buys large quantities of US goods and services, surpassed only by Canada and China. So it behooves each of our countries to facilitate commerce across the Southwest border, which is responsible for many American and Mexican jobs.

However, this same border also experiences a substantial amount of illegal trade crossing between the two countries, with narcotics and illegal immigrants coming north, and money and weapons heading south. Mexican drug cartels now dominate the wholesale illicit drug market in the United States, earning from \$13.6 billion to \$48.4 billion annually. Since President Calderon took office in 2006 and began directly confronting the drug cartels, Mexico and its border regions have been wracked by violence. The cartels control large swaths of Mexican territory and dozens of municipalities, and they are waging violent turf battles over control of key smuggling corridors from Nuevo Laredo to San Diego. Over the past four years, the death toll in Mexico has exceeded 35,000, with each year setting a record higher than the previous one.

The United States has been aggressively working with Mexico to stop this violence, because what happens south of the border is more than just Mexico's problem. Recognizing our shared responsibility has led to enhanced cooperation between our governments. The DHS agencies before us today have had unprecedented cooperation with Mexican law enforcement and the military on information sharing, joint training, cross border communications, and exchange of

personnel. You have also implemented unprecedented initiatives to interdict illicit shipments flowing north and south along the border. We are going to hear today about those efforts and the funding for the Southwest Border Initiative.

But as we take stock of the challenges we face related to the Mexican cartels, it is also important for us to step back and consider all of the forces at play in the drug trade. I have often thought, and said, that the strength and security of our nation are not just about the budget explicitly labeled "homeland security" and "defense." Success or failure in the war on the cartels is no different. We can't expect to solve our drug problems if we put more and more resources into interdiction at the border while doing very little to curtail the demand for drugs on our own streets -- or even worse, if we actually diminish our demand-side efforts. But I'm afraid that's exactly what we are confronting in the current-year budget discussion.

The House majority's funding bill for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2011, H.R.1, takes a serious bite out of our efforts to prevent and treat drug abuse and thereby reduce demand for the cartels' poisonous commodities. It would implement a massive \$581 million cut to State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance funds, which include a variety of programs linked to drug abuse treatment like Byrne grants, the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program, drug courts, and Second Chance reentry programs for ex-offenders. It also takes \$191 million from Juvenile Justice grants, which are also used to treat drug abuse among youth in our communities. H.R. 1 takes an indiscriminant, \$229 million-dollar cut from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration at HHS. It cuts the Office of National Drug Control Policy by nearly \$70 million and completely eliminates an initiative to get ex-offenders into the legitimate workforce. To put it simply, H.R. 1 would set our national drug control efforts back by over a billion dollars. It would rob Peter to pay Paul, cutting programs that reduce demand while maintaining those targeted at the supply of drugs.

I realize that none of our witnesses today can address these programs that fall outside the Department of Homeland Security, and I won't ask you to. But I think it's important to raise this issue because the work we do on this Subcommittee does not occur in a vacuum -- neither does the work that your agencies do along our borders and coastlines. Your agencies' objectives are significantly affected by forces related to the drug trade that are outside of your control. So I encourage us all to bear that in mind today and as we continue to grapple with our fiscal challenges while trying to preserve the strength and security of our country.

Gentlemen, I look forward to your testimony and a frank discussion. The men and women under your leadership should be commended for all their hard work, their record seizures to date, and the great sacrifices they make on behalf of the safety and security of the American

people.

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